

CLAIMS

What is claimed:

1. A method for advertising-supported communications in a telecommunications network, the method comprising:

5 receiving a call request to connect a call from an originating subscriber terminal to a destination subscriber terminal, the call request including a destination identifier associated with the destination subscriber terminal;

providing at least one advertisement to a subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal;

10 determining a free calling balance for the subscriber based on the destination identifier and based on providing the at least one advertisement to the subscriber;

connecting the call from the originating subscriber terminal to the destination subscriber terminal; and

15 monitoring the free calling balance as the call progresses. ✓

2. A computer readable medium having stored therein instructions to execute the method of claim 1.

20 3. The method of claim 1, wherein determining the free calling balance comprises:

determining an advertisement time associated with the at least one advertisement being provided to the subscriber;

determining a number of credits of free calling time based on the advertisement time being provided to the subscriber; and

determining a free calling time based on the number of credits of free calling time and the destination identifier.

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4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining the free calling balance comprises:

determining an advertisement time associated with the at least one advertisement being provided to the subscriber;

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determining a number of credits of free calling time based on the advertisement time;

determining a zone measure between the originating subscriber terminal and the destination subscriber terminal; and

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determining a free calling time based on the number of credits of free calling time and the zone measure.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein determining the zone measure comprises:

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determining a distance between the originating subscriber terminal and the destination subscriber terminal; and

determining the zone measure based on the distance between the originating subscriber terminal and the destination subscriber terminal.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

determining a discounted calling time for the subscriber based on the destination identifier and the at least one advertisement being provided to the subscriber; and

5 connecting the call from the originating subscriber terminal to the destination subscriber terminal; and

monitoring the discounted calling time as the call progresses.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein determining the free calling balance
10 comprises:

determining an advertisement time associated with the at least one advertisement being provided to the subscriber;

determining a credit value based on the advertisement time; and

determining a free calling time based on the credit value and the destination
15 identifier associated with the destination subscriber terminal.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

decrementing the free calling balance as the call progresses;

determining if the free calling balance reaches a predetermined threshold
20 level; and, if so,

notifying the subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein notifying the subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal when the free calling balance reaches the predetermined threshold level comprises:

making a determination whether to provide additional advertisement to the subscriber; if so,

providing the additional advertisement to the subscriber; and

updating the free calling balance for the subscriber based on the additional advertisement being provided to the subscriber.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein determining whether to provide additional advertisement to the subscriber comprises querying the subscriber to obtain subscriber's instructions to provide the additional advertisement.

11. The method of claim 9, further comprising terminating the call when the free calling balance reaches a call termination threshold level.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the destination identifier associated with the destination subscriber terminal is selected from a group consisting of (i) a Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) telephone number, (ii) a mobile identification number (MIN), (iii) an IP address, (iv) an ENUM, (v) a Network Access Identifier (NAI), and (vi) a domain name.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining if the originating subscriber terminal is designated to receive advertisement services before providing the at least one advertisement to the subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal.

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14. The method of claim 13, further comprising not providing the at least one advertisement to the subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal if the subscriber terminal is not designated to receive the advertisement services.

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15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

querying a subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal to specify an expected length of the call to be connected from the originating subscriber terminal to the destination subscriber terminal; and

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providing the at least one advertisement based on the expected length of the call, wherein the at least one advertisement being provided to the subscriber is sufficient to connect the call for the specified length.

16. A method for advertising supported communications in a telecommunications network, the method comprising:

receiving a call request to connect a call from an originating subscriber terminal to a destination subscriber terminal, the call request including a destination identifier associated with the destination subscriber terminal and further including a service code;

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determining whether a subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal is designated to receive advertising supported services; if so,
providing at least one advertisement to the subscriber;
determining a free calling balance for the subscriber based on the destination identifier and based on providing the at least one advertisement to the subscriber;
connecting the call from the originating subscriber terminal to the destination subscriber terminal;
decrementing the free calling balance as the call progresses;
disconnecting the call from the originating subscriber terminal to the destination subscriber terminal;
determining whether any unused free calling balance is left; and, if so, discarding the any used free calling balance.

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17. A computer readable medium having stored therein instructions to execute the method of claim 16.

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18. The method of claim 16, wherein determining whether a subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal is designated to receive advertising supported services comprises determining whether the service code is an advertisement service code.

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19. The method of claim 16, wherein determining whether a subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal is designated to receive advertising supported services comprises:

retrieving a subscriber record associated with the subscriber of the originating subscriber terminal; and

determining whether the subscriber record designates the subscriber to receive the advertising supported services.

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20. The method of claim 16, wherein the destination identifier associated with the destination subscriber terminal is selected from a group consisting of (i) a Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) telephone number, (ii) a mobile identification number (MIN), (iii) an IP address, (iv) an ENUM, (v) a Network Access Identifier (NAI), and (vi) a domain name.

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21. The method of claim 16; wherein providing at least one advertisement to the subscriber comprises playing the at least one advertisement to the subscriber.

22. The method of claim 16, wherein providing at least one advertisement to the subscriber comprises displaying the at least one advertisement to the subscriber via the originating subscriber terminal.

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23. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

determining a discounted calling time for the subscriber based on the destination identifier and the at least one advertisement being provided to the subscriber;

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connecting the call from the originating subscriber terminal to the destination subscriber terminal; and

decrementing the discounted calling time as the call progresses.

24. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

querying the subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal to
5 specify an expected length of the call; and

providing the at least one advertisement to the subscriber, wherein the at least
one advertisement being provided to the subscriber is sufficient to connect the call for
the specified length of the call.

10 25. A system for advertising-supported communications, the system
comprising:

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a first network entity for receiving a call request to connect a call from an
originating subscriber terminal to a destination subscriber terminal, the call request
including a destination identifier associated with the destination subscriber terminal;

15 a second network entity for providing at least one advertisement to a
subscriber associated with the originating subscriber terminal; and

a third network entity for determining a calling balance for the subscriber
based on the destination identifier and based on providing the at least one
advertisement to the subscriber and monitoring the calling balance when the call from
20 the originating subscriber terminal is connected to the destination subscriber terminal.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein the calling balance comprises a free
calling balance or a discounted calling time.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein the first network entity comprises a switch, the second network entity comprises a voice command platform, and a third network entity comprises a calculation engine.

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28. The system of claim 26, further comprising, a fourth network entity determining if the originating subscriber terminal is designated to receive advertisement services before the second network entity providing the at least one advertisement to the subscriber associated with the originating subscriber entity.

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29. The system of claim 28, wherein the fourth network entity comprises a service controller.